



RED RIVER

Love is the spirit of this church



RAMBLINGS

Virtual Worship Sundays @ 11:15 am on both our [YouTube channel](#) and [Facebook page](#)

Sunday, February 7, 2021

NEW PROPHETS FOR THE CHURCH OF THE REAL WORLD
the rev. Dr. Christine Tata, *leading*

Since the middle of the twentieth century, this country has struggled to throw off its beginnings as an apartheid state and live up to its promise. The post-World War II generation contributed some prophetic voices—but not enough, and there has been despair. But now, there are new prophets... new poets... new actions being taken by people with a fierce faith, transforming the spiritual and political landscape. Generation Z is putting the *real* back in *real/igion*. Tune in next Sunday to be challenged ... and glad.

Sunday, February 14, 2021

WHY I WON'T PLAY BACKYARD SOCCER IN CHILE
Dick Powell, *speaking*

I know that some of you have experienced living in another country. I lived 7 years in South America, first as a Peace Corps Volunteer in Chile and later with my wife and kids in Colombia. My experience in each country was profoundly different, but I can look back with many good feelings. I hope you'll join me as I share some memories of my life in South America.

Sunday, February 21, 2021

FIRST, THERE WAS EVE IN AFRICA
the rev. Dr. Christine Tata

If you're ever feeling lonely, just remember that every stranger you meet is actually your distant kin. We are all descendants of the first human: Mitochondrial Eve, the original *homo sapiens*, who emerged in Africa as the ancestral mother of the whole race. Moreover, Africa's centuries-long history of civilizations and empire dwarfs that of the United States and mo. So please join the Rev. Dr. Christine Tata on February 21 at 11:15 a.m. when we will ponder how we all got here: first, there was Eve... *Special What's Behind The Curtain Event Following Today's Assembly! ~ noon on Zoom*

Sunday, February 28, 2021

BUILDING A BETTER WORLD MIGHT TAKE SOME WORK
Daniel Polk, *speaking*

In this discourse, I will be looking at the ways in which our lives are enhanced by religious freedom while noting the ways religious freedom has been misused and abused throughout history and in the present day.

Church Re-Imagined ~ What's Behind the Curtain?

We have always had an appreciation dinner in February but elected not to do that this year for obvious reasons. The Board decided to look at how church has changed in the pandemic and recognize those who have made an above and beyond effort to make it happen.

While doing this, we thought it would be a good time to reflect on what is good that we would want to retain when we can again gather in our beautiful building.

Check out the details elsewhere in this issue of *Red River Ramblings*.

This will be fun! Everyone has an opinion and can contribute! Everyone will want to know who is making this special effort and recognize them!

Sunday, February 21st at Noon - same Zoom link as the Online Coffee Hour: 933 8502 2882

Coming Home?

Ed. Note: The following information was extracted the UUA post dated 1-29-2021, by Dr Susan Frederick-Gray, UUA President.

Because of the re-opening of some in-person spaces around us, and because of our strong desire to connect once again in the sacred spaces of our congregational buildings, many are asking when and how to resume in-person programs and services.

We have articulated the following principles for thinking about when and how to go back. They are grounded in Unitarian Universalism's deep values.

- Our abiding care and concern for the most vulnerable, inside and outside our congregation.
- Accessibility and inclusion for all of our members and friends to participate in our congregation, regardless of health status, health vulnerability, or ability.
- Recognition that we are part of an interdependent web and, as such, our risk-taking and our protective actions affect far more than just ourselves.
- Our congregational decisions can impact other congregations and the wider community.

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Jim's Jabber

It is with heavy heart to report that Ronda DeCaire, our dear church member and friend, lost her battle with cancer on January 10, 2021. We held a virtual gathering to honor and remember her life on January 24th. Thank you Doug for leading the service.

February is a month filled with awards and celebration. However, nothing is normal any more with the pandemic still present. NTUUC has canceled their award ceremony this year (and is also not bestowing any grants either). Our traditional Annual Appreciation Dinner and the presentation of the Bruce Cameron Distinguished Service Award, usually held in late February, also will not happen.

In its place, the Board decided to hold a special Zoom event we're calling "**Church Re-imagined: What's Behind the Curtain.**" You no doubt saw the announcement on the front page of this month's *Red River Ramblings*. It will replace our online Coffee Hour, following Dr. Tata's remarks on Sunday, February 21st. (Use the online coffee hour Zoom link to join the fun.)

Spring is also the time for our annual Stewardship Campaign. While we had reduced our current expenses with the building closed, we've needed to increase the worship team's budget to pay for the additional speakers and cover added costs in producing video morning assemblies. Also, we've agreed to follow the UU Minister's Association recommendations to increase honoraria to ministers. We've been able to cover these added expenses through our cost savings measures along with non-budget funds we obtained. The 2021-2022 budget will have to cover these expanded costs.

The Spring Congregational meeting, again via Zoom, this year is on May 19th. We will have reports from the Board of Trustees, President, Committee on Ministry, and the Membership Committee. We will approve the budget for the next year, and elect various church leaders. Our Nominating committee is working on filling the open positions.

This newsletter's side panel article from the UUA explores ideas and recommendations regarding when to return home. We'll have an open discussion at the spring meeting on your thoughts about when we might reopen the church. It is our hope that once we reopen we can continue to broadcast our morning assemblies on our YouTube and Facebook platforms each week for those who want to join us online.

Take care, keep safe and keep on trucking.

Jim Holmes
President

Coming Home?

- Our affirmation that good science, coupled with our UU values, must be the basis upon which we make decisions about in-person gathering.
- Commitment to our mission, community, and theology more than ever, mindful of the spiritual demands of this transition.
- Our deep hope that we as a country, and as a world, will not return to “normal” when the pandemic is over. We seek to live into “a new normal” of more justice, more love, more equity, more sustainability, and more peace.

In this difficult and extraordinary time, we invite you to engage with us in ongoing creativity as we all minister to one another.

UUA Recommendations:

- We strongly discourage smaller in-person gatherings (such as meetings or one-to-one pastoral care) in indoor spaces, even with masks. Even the best masks are not 100% effective in preventing the spread of the virus from person to person. Our values of safety and inclusion call on us to minimize risk. We do not always know who might be most vulnerable to being harmed, or killed, by this virus. And we do not want to place the burden of educating or correcting us on the people who are most vulnerable.

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Jan's Virtual Musical Circle

If you enjoy acoustic music and friendship, join Jan's Virtual Music Circle on Zoom each month. We meet on Zoom. You are invited to log on to our zoom meeting to hear singer-songwriter favorites as well as original songs. And there is always some new tidbit shared.

There was a small, but powerful group of musicians at the January Music Circle to celebrate the new year! John Williams of Sherman, Phil Hartman of Gunter, Bill Nash of Taos and Jouette Travis of Dallas shared their talents with Marla Loturco, Amy Hoffman-Shehan, Jim Holmes and me. Music and stories proved so interesting that no one wanted to end.

Next gathering will be Saturday, February 20 from 6 – 8 with performance sign in starting at 5:30. Here's the Zoom link: Meeting ID: 970 4165 1332. Although Valentine's Day will be past, love songs are always popular. Questions? Email me [here](#). Jan.

Common Read Discussion Group

There's still time to sign up for the UU Common Read. Marion notes that she has a few registered for a discussion of this interesting book (*Breathe*), but the discussions won't begin until mid-February. If you're interested, please get in touch with her right away.

Staying connected to other people during this pandemic is more difficult than when life is “normal,” but doing so seems especially important. One way UUs can connect with others of our faith is by reading and discussing the UU Common Read for 2020-21: *Breathe: A Letter to My Sons* by Imani Perry.

The book is addressed to Perry's two African-American sons, advising them on how to navigate this often-racist society, but many of its observations can apply to everyone, not only people of color. Imani draws upon her own family anecdotes—sometimes funny, always insightful—as well as the writings of such disparate figures as James Baldwin, Emily Dickinson, Ida B. Wells, Toni Morrison, and Ralph Waldo Emerson.

The book is available in hard cover from inSpirit (the UU bookstore) for \$18.00 and also from Amazon for \$12.

Marion Hill has volunteered to lead one or more discussions of the book. Please [email her](#) ASAP if you want to join the group. Discussions will be held via Zoom.

“Once I have a slate of people who plan to participate, we will get the discussion materials from uua.org, and then have 3-4 casual, free-wheeling talks about the book and whatever else seems relevant (or not).”

You are warmly invited to join the 2021 UUA Common Read. Better than watching reruns of *Gilligan's Island*, right?

Coming Home?

- Our highest values and commitments call us to refrain from in-person gathering until the COVID-19 pandemic is controlled. We invite you to think of your congregation as primarily digitally-connected, with small in-person nodes that can grow as the pandemic subsides.
- Our recommendations for congregations are indeed more stringent than schools and businesses that surround you, for the following reasons:
 - As a community that values inclusion and collective care, we don't want to create in-person situations that inadvertently exclude those at higher risk, or create situations that force those at higher risk to publicly identify themselves. Our decision-making must center the needs of the most vulnerable.
 - The membership of most UU congregations is an older, more vulnerable population than the general public.
 - We do not want congregational staff and ministers to be put at risk on the job.
 - A normally-operating congregation presents too many opportunities to spread a highly contagious respiratory virus like COVID-19.

Details... Behind the Curtain

Yes, Virginia, we can have a pleasant, entertaining, and fun time in a virtual room full of smiling RedRiverUU faces. For many of us **this will be the first time you've participated in a church Zoom gathering!**

This promises to be a 'worth it' gathering. It is not a congregational meeting, no one will try to recruit you to coordinate the spring stewardship campaign, or harangue you for *not once* watching a Morning Assembly. Nope! None of that.

This promises to be a time to remember, to reminisce, to recall what church was like and to imagine and envision how the pandemic might shape our community when we return home again.



We'll light a chalice, remember LD and Ronda, recognize some wizards and appreciate others. We'll think a bit about how being apart has changed the church and see if we can merge the re-imagined church into the traditional church we've come to love *and miss terribly!*

Having peeked behind the curtain, we will extinguish the chalice and can enjoy remembering no one has to put tables away, wash dishes or vacuum the chapel.

Add the date to your calendar: Sunday, February 21 at noon during what usually is our online coffee hour. Connecting is a snap - same ID as the coffee hour.

Here's the Zoom Meeting ID: 933 8502 2882. You can also join using this link: <https://zoom.us/j/93385022882>

Save the Date Now ... February 21 Noon

Ongoing Virtual Gatherings

Many of our congregations have done an incredible amount of work to bring people together for virtual worship and did so on very short notice as the virus spread across the US and world. We applaud and share gratitude for all you have done to create meaningful, spiritual and connective spaces of words and music and love in this extraordinary time.

Now that it's not just an emergency stop-gap way of doing things, congregational leaders are called to ask one another:

- How can we expand our level of inclusion and engagement in virtual congregational life?
- What additional equipment or training or assistance do our staff and volunteers need for continuing online-only worship?
- What do we need to invest in, with technology, equipment, or people-power, to keep this going until it is safe for everyone to return to in-person worship/programs?
- How can we imagine broader and more inclusive ministries, worship, and programming in a *post-COVID-19* world given what we've been learning and implementing?

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Adult Forum

In recognition of Black History Month, adult forum will watch and discuss two videos. February 7 and 14, we will watch *Robin DiAngelo discusses White Fragility*.

The 41-minute video will be divided in half, leaving plenty of time for discussion. We will watch *How To Be An Antiracist* by Ibram X Kendi February 21 and 21. This video lasts 1 hour and 51 minutes, so there will be less time for discussion those two weeks.



We Are Unitarian Universalists

A new video from the UUA, that explains Who We Are in less than four minutes.

A perfect way to explain our free faith tradition in terms that are inclusive and easy to understand. It is also on our website, and in our mobile app. Tap to play.



Treasurer's Report

In the month of December, we had total receipts of \$3171.46. Expenses for the month totaled \$2261.54. The result was an excess of receipts over expenditures of \$909.92. As of December 20, 2020, we had \$6220.68 available in checking, \$16,532.20 in general savings, \$12,058.50 in the Endowment Fund at UUCEF, and \$54,725.90 in the Savings Fund at UUCEF for a total of \$83,378.67 in all savings accounts. We have a total of \$6,779.39 remaining on the renovation loan.

Marilyn Alexander,
Treasurer

February Birthdays

02 - Jerry Harris | 22 - Dick Powell

Ongoing Virtual Gatherings

We invite you to think creatively in partnership with other congregations about how to minister to the needs of your communities—we know that many meaningful cross-congregational collaborations, forged in the time of COVID-19, are already underway. It is a time for joining together in mutual support. That is how we will make it through.

How to Decide When to Resume In-Person Gathering

We are guided by science and our deepest values, not politics, when we urge congregations to not resume full in-person operations until concrete public health criteria are met.

We offer [this series of values-based and practical questions](#) for you to consider.

Our [UU Congregation in Reston, Virginia has created an excellent policy](#) on when to consider regathering in person.

Our UU congregation in Duluth, Minnesota has developed a [six-tier COVID-19 safety plan](#) based on local health indicators. Their work provides a second example of how a congregation might enact its own guidelines.

Conclusion

As the pandemic continues to play out, we as Unitarian Universalists and we as UU congregations will continue to face uncertainty. The best we can do at any given time is to lean in to our values as well as draw on the gifts and wisdom of our own people. Know that, whatever comes, we as your UUA staff are your partners. We will be here to help you think through tough situations and find a way forward. We will help connect you with others so we can all learn together. We will be there, as your partners, working alongside you for health, love, spiritual connection, and justice in your communities and beyond. [Find your congregation's regional staff](#) for direct support.

Our Leaders

Board of Trustees

Jim Holmes, *President*

Lisa Cates, *Vice-President*

Marilyn Alexander, *Treasurer*

David Dyer, *Secretary*

Sabra Jones, *Trustee*

Committee on Ministry:

Dan Althoff, Elbert Hill, Marla Loturco

Nominating:

Kelly Cofield Dyer, Amy Hoffman-Shehan,

Team Leaders/Members:

Adult Forum: *Sabra*

Aesthetics: *Carol, Doug, Joyce*

Caring Circle: *Kelly*

Communications: *Doug*

Endowment: *Carolyn, Dick, Doug*

Facilities: *Jim (until we find someone)*

Finance: *Jim, Dick, Jan, Marilyn*

Grounds: *Marilyn*

Long Range Planning: *Jim, Marilyn, Robert, Ronda*

Membership: *Marion*

NTUUC Rep: *Marla*

RE Team: *Tommi*

Safe Congregation Panel: *Dan*

Social Action:

Welcoming Congregation: *Adrian, Amy, Lisa, Marla, Thomas*

Worship: *Dan, Doug, Keller, Marla, Robert*

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The church calendar is now merged with the EVENTS listing on the church website home page